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ABSTRACT

This report examines statistical data on fathers caring for their children during mothers' working hours and which types of fathers are the most likely to take care of their children. Data are taken from the Survey of Income and Program Participation, a longitudinal survey conducted at four-month intervals by the Census Bureau. Care by fathers is considered to encompass, to some extent, all three of the components of fathers' involvement: interaction, availability, and responsibility. Fathers are more likely to care for their preschool-age children than for their grade school-age children. The article discusses changes in proportions of married fathers who care for their preschoolers while the mothers are at work. The likelihood of fathers being caregivers is related to employment status and occupation, the effect of the economy, family's financial status, veteran status, geographic location, residence in city or suburb, and number of children. Charts and graphs of the data are presented. (JPB)

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Current Population Reports
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My Daddy Takes Care of Me! Fathers as Care Providers

By Lynne M. Casper

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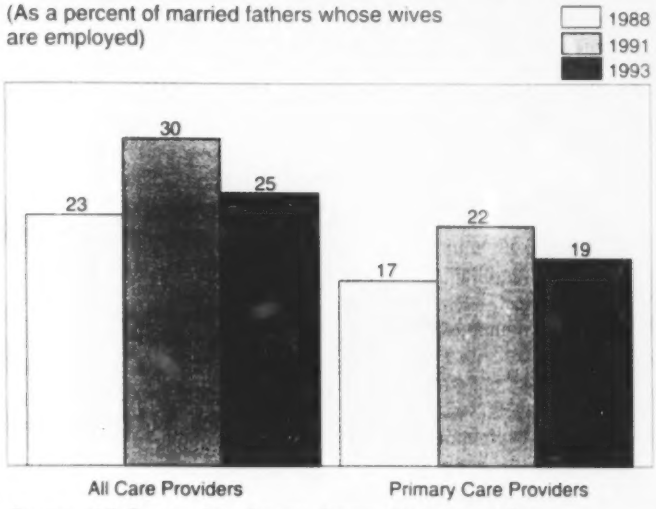
Over the past 5 years, there has been increasing interest in the roles fathers play in shaping their children's lives. With renewed emphasis on family values in the public policy debate about the well-being of families, fathers' roles in child-rearing have been launched into the spotlight. It is undisputed among researchers and policy pundits alike that fathers' involvement is extremely important for children's proper social and emotional development. Furthermore, fathers interact differently with their children than do mothers, and it is fathers' unique interaction that is said to help promote specifically children's emotional development.[1]

The increasing interest in fathers' involvement has been mirrored in the media, with reporters covering stories on a wide array of father-related topics. Articles have been written on diverse topics ranging from stay-at-home dads to fathers as child care providers, to fathers seeking custody of their children. In addition, several fathers' organizations have been formed to provide support to fathers as they take on an increasing number of the challenges associated with child-rearing. But what do we mean by fathers' involvement? Researchers distinguished several types of fathers' involvement at the 1996 National Institutes of Health's Family and Child Well-Being Network's Conference on Father Involvement. One of the most influential series of studies which was frequently referred to at this conference suggested three types of involvement: interaction, availability, and responsibility.[2] In this report, we look at one aspect of fathers' involvement — fathers caring for their children during mothers' working hours — and examine which types of fathers are the most likely to take care of their children.[3] It should be noted that care by fathers, as examined in this report, taps, to some extent, all three of the components of fathers' involvement.

Figure 1.
Fathers Caring for Their Preschoolers: 1988 to 1993
(As a percent of married fathers whose wives are employed)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

One in four fathers take care of their preschoolers during the time mothers are working

According to the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), in the fall of 1993, 14.8 million fathers were in married-couple families with children aged 0 to 14 whose mothers were employed (Table 1). Of these fathers, 2.9 million, or 1 in 5, provided care for at least one child under age 15 while the child's mother was working. In this same year, about 1.9 million or 13 percent of fathers were the primary care provider — they provided care for their children during more of the mother's working hours than did any other single care provider.

Fathers are more likely to care for their preschool-age children than for their gradeschool-age

[1] Parke, R.D. 1990. "In Search of Fathers: A Narrative of an Empirical Journey." In *Methods of Family Research, Volume 1*. I. Sigel and G. Brody, eds. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

[2] Lamb, M.E., J.H. Pleck, E.L. Charnov, and J.A. Levine. 1987. "A Biosocial Perspective on Paternal Behavior and Involvement. In *Parenting Across the Lifespan: Biosocial Dimensions*. J.B. Lancaster, J. Altman, A.S. Rossi, and L.R. Sherrod, eds. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

[3] In this report, we use the term "working" to refer to mothers who are working for pay, whether at home or away from home; we do not mean to infer that homemaking activities do not constitute work.

children. In the fall of 1993, there were 6.3 million married fathers of preschoolers whose mothers were employed. Of these fathers, 1.6 million or 1 in 4 were taking care of their preschoolers while the mothers were at work. In contrast, while there were 11.4 million fathers of gradeschool-age children, only 16 percent (1.8 million) were taking care of their gradeschoolers.[4] Fathers of preschoolers were also more likely to be primary care providers. Almost 1 in 5 fathers were primary care providers for preschoolers compared with fewer than 1 in 10 for gradeschoolers.

Because young children require constant attention and care, the fact that more fathers care for their preschoolers than for their gradeschoolers may at first appear surprising. However, there are many reasons why one might expect fathers to be more likely to take care of younger children. First, preschool-aged children are much more likely than older children to require supervision while their mothers are away at work simply because during the school year, older children are more likely to be in school all day. In addition, because the early years in a child's life are generally regarded as the most formative, parents may be more willing to juggle their work schedules to arrange for parental care, resulting in more fathers caring for younger children. Another reason may be that fathers who have older children are more likely to be older and to have higher earnings with which to purchase alternative care services. In addition, parents may be more willing to allow older children to care for themselves because they are more mature and better equipped to handle the situations that may arise.

Table 1.

Fathers Providing Care for Children While Mothers Are Working: 1988 to 1993

(Numbers in thousands)

Fathers providing care	1993		1991		1988	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Caring for Children 0-14						
Total number of fathers [1]	14,849	100.0	14,620	100.0	14,278	100.0
Providing some care	2,914	19.6	3,331	22.8	2,698	18.9
Primary provider of care	1,915	12.9	2,032	13.9	1,688	11.8
Caring for Children Under 5						
Total number of fathers	6,274	100.0	6,274	100.0	6,536	100.0
Providing some care	1,554	24.8	1,901	30.3	1,523	23.3
Primary provider of care	1,164	18.5	1,407	22.4	1,107	16.9
Caring for Children 5-14						
Total number of fathers	11,412	100.0	11,256	100.0	10,720	100.0
Providing some care	1,780	15.6	1,975	17.5	1,660	15.5
Primary provider of care	1,034	9.1	1,015	9.0	941	8.8

[1] The number of fathers of children under 5 combined with the number of fathers of children 5-14 does not sum to the total number of fathers of children 0-14 because some fathers have children in both age groups.

Note: Limited to married fathers whose wives are employed.

Because fathers are so much more likely to care for their preschoolers and because our data are better suited to analyzing care for preschoolers, in the remainder of this report, we focus on married fathers with children under 5 whose mothers are employed.

The proportion of fathers caring for their preschoolers has shifted dramatically over the past few years

Noteworthy changes have recently occurred in the proportions of married fathers who care for their preschoolers while their mothers are at work.[5] Among married-couple families with preschool-age children, the proportion of fathers who acted as child care providers during their wives' working hours sharply increased from 23 percent in 1988 to 30 percent in 1991 (Figure 1). However, by 1993, the proportion of fathers providing care fell back down to 25 percent. In terms of numbers, there were 1.5 million fathers caring for their preschoolers in 1988, rising to 1.9 million in 1991, but falling back down to 1.6 million by 1993 (Table 1).

The proportions of fathers providing primary care changed in a similar fashion over this same time period. The proportion of fathers who were primary care providers increased from 17 percent in 1988 to 22 percent in 1991, representing a 30 percent increase over the 3 year period. By 1993, however, this proportion had fallen back down to 19 percent. In 1988 and 1993, this translates into about 1.1 million fathers providing primary care for their preschoolers, compared with 1.4 million in 1991.

The increase in care by fathers between 1988 and 1991 may have been a response to the economic recession which occurred during the same period (the recession began in July 1990 and reached its lowest point in March 1991). Increases in the proportions of people who were not employed and working at part-time jobs may have meant that more fathers were available to serve as child care providers.[6] The increase in care by fathers may have also reflected the desire of parents to cut down on child

[4] Part of the apparent drop for school-age children compared with preschoolers results from the way the data are collected. Currently in the SIPP, we ask parents to list up to two arrangements they use to care for their children while the mother is working. School is included as one possible response. Since many gradeschoolers are in school while their mothers are working, the majority of parents report school as their primary care arrangement. Therefore, the probability that the father will be mentioned as a primary care provider declines substantially simply because of the way the child care questions are asked.

[5] Data are shown for 1988 and 1991 because of the desire to depict child care arrangements used by families in a recent recession (1991) as opposed to adjacent nonrecession years (1988 and 1991). Data for 1989, 1990, and 1992 are not available for analysis.

[6] For more information about employment patterns during the recession see U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995, *Income and Job Mobility in the Early 1990's*, SB/95-1, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC.

care costs by switching to more parental supervision of their children whenever possible. That the decline in care by fathers between 1991 and 1993 occurred at the same time as the economy was expanding also supports this notion.

To further investigate the possibility that the proportion of fathers providing care for their children may have been driven largely by the economy and the attendant economic circumstances of families with young children, we turn now to examining how a married father's employment status and work schedule are related to whether or not he cares for his children. We also look at whether there were changes in the levels of fathers' employment from 1988 to 1993 which could account for the change in care by fathers over the same period.

Fathers who don't work and those whose jobs are at night or part time are more likely to care for their preschoolers

A married father's employment status makes a big difference in whether or not he provides care for his preschool-age children — those who are not employed are much more likely to be providing care. For example, in 1993, 58 percent of fathers who were not employed provided care for their preschoolers during their wives' working hours compared with only 23 percent of fathers who were employed (Table 2). Nonemployed fathers — those who were either unemployed or not in the labor force — were also much more likely to be primary care providers than employed fathers (50 percent compared with 16 percent).[7]

The amount of time a father works determines in part his availability to take care of his preschoolers while their mother is at work. Married fathers who work part time are much more likely to take care of their preschoolers than are fathers who work full time — 32 percent of fathers compared with only 22 percent in 1993. In addition, married fathers working part time in 1993 were twice as likely to be primary providers for their preschoolers as fathers working full time.

The type of shift a father works is also an important factor. In 1993, married fathers who worked evening or night shifts were twice as likely to take care of the preschoolers during their mothers working hours as fathers who worked day shifts (34 percent compared with 18 percent).[8] Nonday shift fathers were also twice as likely to be primary care providers as day shift fathers (26 percent compared with 13 percent).

The economy can have a large impact on the availability of fathers for care as well as on the likelihood of fathers providing care

We have seen that in 1993, married fathers who were not employed and those who worked part time or nonday shifts were more likely to take care of their preschoolers. But are these patterns the same over time, and have fathers in the same employment status been equally as likely

[7] There is no significant difference between the 58 percent of nonemployed fathers providing any care and the 50 percent providing primary care.

[8] Day shift in this report is defined as a work schedule where at least one-half of the hours worked daily were between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. All other schedules in which the majority of hours are worked outside of this period or which have irregular or rotating hours are classified as nonday work shifts.

Table 2.

Fathers Providing Care for Preschoolers While Mothers Are Working, by Employment Status of Fathers: 1988 to 1993

(Numbers in thousands)

Employment status of father	1993			1991			1988		
	Total	Number of providers	Percent providing	Total	Number of providers	Percent providing	Total	Number of providers	Percent providing
All Providers	6,274	1,554	24.8	6,274	1,901	30.3	6,536	1,523	23.3
Employment Status									
Not employed [1]	412	238	57.6	487	312	64.1	293	167	56.9
Employed [2]	5,862	1,316	22.5	5,788	1,589	27.5	6,242	1,356	21.7
Full time	5,428	1,176	21.7	5,217	1,378	26.4	5,887	1,260	21.4
Part time	434	141	32.3	571	211	37.0	355	96	26.9
Type of Work Shift [3]									
Day shift	4,275	784	18.3	3,981	932	23.4	4,492	842	18.7
Nonday shift	1,586	533	33.6	1,807	657	36.4	1,751	514	29.4
Primary Care Providers	6,274	1,164	18.5	6,274	1,407	22.4	6,536	1,107	16.9
Employment Status									
Not employed [1]	412	207	50.2	487	257	52.8	293	136	46.5
Employed [2]	5,862	957	16.3	5,788	1,150	19.9	6,242	971	15.6
Full time	5,428	838	15.4	5,217	995	19.1	5,887	898	15.3
Part time	434	119	27.4	571	155	27.1	355	72	20.4
Type of Work Shift [3]									
Day shift	4,275	549	12.8	3,981	644	16.2	4,492	580	12.9
Nonday shift	1,586	408	25.7	1,807	505	28.0	1,751	391	22.3

[1] Includes persons who were unemployed, enrolled in school, or not in the labor force the month prior to the survey.
[2] In the month prior to the survey.
[3] For fathers who were employed in the month prior to the survey.
Note: Limited to married fathers whose wives are employed.

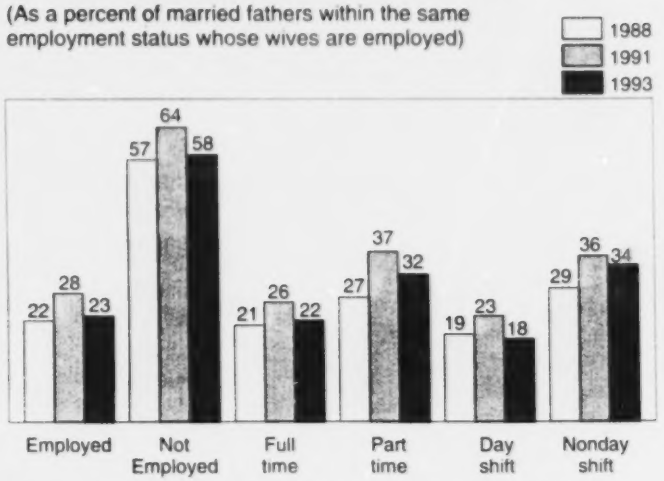
to care for their preschool-aged children over time? The answer to the first question is "yes: fathers who are not employed, those working part time, and those working nonday shifts were consistently more likely to be caring for their children in 1988, 1991, and 1993 (Figure 2).[9] In other words, regardless of the prevailing economic conditions of the time, fathers who are in what might be considered the more "nontraditional" employment statuses are more likely to take care of their preschoolers when compared to those in the more "traditional" employment statuses.[10]

The answer to the second question is not so clear-cut. Within the same **traditional** employment status the answer is "no": the proportion of married fathers providing care for their preschoolers was higher in the recession year of 1991 than in either of the nonrecession years — 1988 or 1993. However, within the same **nontraditional** status the answer is "yes": in general, fathers were no more likely to take care of their preschoolers in 1991 than in 1988 or 1993.

Changes in the economy can affect whether or not a father will take care of his children in several ways. If a father is unemployed or underemployed, he will have more "free" time available to care for his children. Also, an economic downturn can mean that even if a father is employed full time, the family may have fewer economic resources with which to purchase alternative child care services. When money is scarce, families are less likely to pay for child care and more likely to rely on relatives including fathers to take care of their children.

Figure 2.
Fathers Providing Care for Their Preschoolers, by Father's Employment Status: 1988 to 1993

(As a percent of married fathers within the same employment status whose wives are employed)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

During the recession year of 1991, fully 17 percent of married fathers were not employed or were working part time (Figure 3). In contrast, only 10 percent and 14 percent of fathers were in these circumstances in 1988 and 1993 respectively. Moreover, the more time a father has available — the greater the number of hours the father is **not** working while the mother is — the more likely he is to be taking care of his preschoolers.[11] For example, in 1993, only 13 percent of fathers who have less than 5 available hours per week take care of their children, compared with 50 percent of fathers who have 20 or more available hours per week (Figure 4). This pattern is basically the same for all 3 years, but within each availability category, in general, fathers were more likely to care for their children in 1991 than in 1988 or 1993.[12] This trend could reflect the desire for families to reduce child care expenditures during poorer economic times. Thus, these comparisons across years show that not only were more fathers available for care in the recession (Figure 3), but they were also more likely to provide care (Figure 4).

The fact that care by fathers declined between 1991 and 1993 indicates that the large increase which occurred between 1988 and 1991 may not have been part of changing social trends, but rather was probably motivated by the shifting economy. This fact does not imply that fathers became less interested in their children's

[9] The one exception is that in 1988 fathers who were employed part time were no more likely than those employed full time to care for their children.

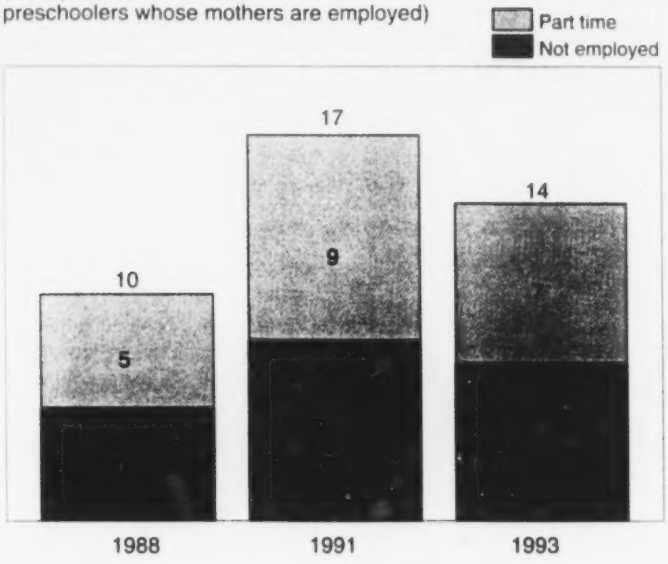
[10] People working nontraditional employment statuses in this report are defined as those who work part time or nonday shifts, while people working traditional employment statuses are those working full time or in day shifts.

[11] This measure includes fathers who are nonemployed and assumes that they are available to care for their children for the entire time the mothers are working. The number of hours a nonemployed father is available to care for his children then, is equal to the number of hours the mother works.

[12] Exceptions are the 5 to 9 hour category where fathers are no more likely to care for their preschoolers in 1991 than in 1988 or 1993, and the 20+ category where fathers are no more likely to care for their preschoolers in 1993 than in 1991.

Figure 3.
Fathers Who Worked Part Time or Were Not Employed: 1988 to 1993

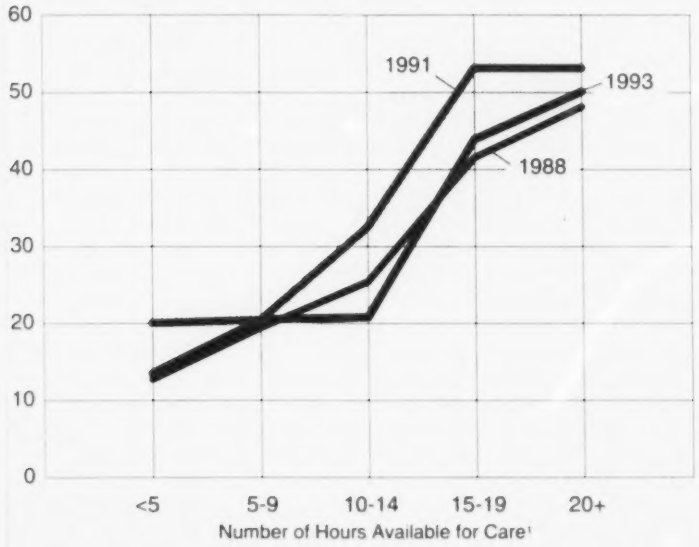
(As a percent of married fathers with preschoolers whose mothers are employed)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

Figure 4.
Fathers Caring for Their Preschoolers, by Hours Available for Care: 1988 to 1993

(As a percent of married fathers within the same availability status whose wives are employed)



[1]The number of hours fathers were not at work during the time their wives were at work.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

well-being between 1991 and 1993; some families may believe that the most valuable and productive role a father can play is to provide food and shelter. As the economy improved and more fathers became fully employed, their availability for care decreased, while their incomes and ability to pay for child care increased.

Care by fathers is most common in poor families

Child care costs constitute an especially large proportion of a poor family's budget, so it comes as no surprise that fathers in poor families are more likely to take care of their children than fathers in nonpoor families — 43 percent compared with 24 percent in 1993, for example (Figure 5).[13] This pattern also occurred in 1988 and 1991.[14] Moreover, in all three years, poor fathers were twice as likely as nonpoor fathers to be primary care providers during the time the mothers were at work. Note, however, that the percentage of nonpoor fathers who were primary providers was much higher in 1991 than in either 1988 or 1993.

Examining care by fathers as it relates to family income yields a similar picture: fathers in families with lower incomes are more likely to care for their children than fathers in families with higher incomes. In 1993 for example, 45 percent of fathers with monthly family incomes of less than $1,500 were caring for their preschoolers, compared with only 30 percent for those with incomes between $1,500 and $2,999 and 26 percent for those with incomes between $3,000 and $4,499.[15] Fathers with monthly family incomes of $4,500 or more were the

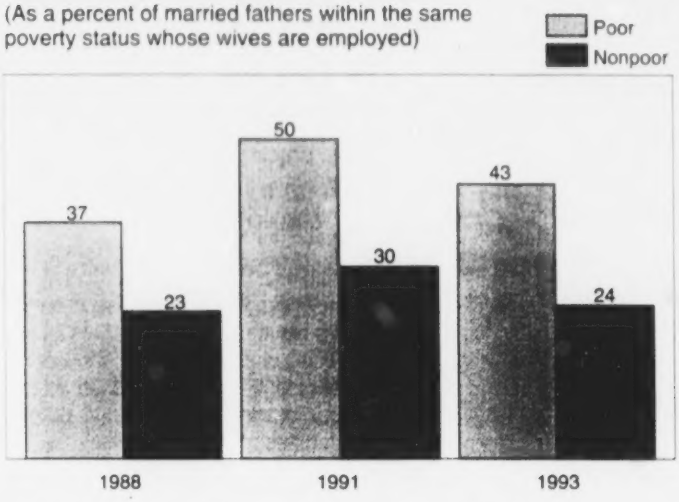
[13] For more information about child care costs see Casper, Lynne M. 1995. *What Does It Cost to Mind Our Preschoolers?* P70-52. U.S. Bureau of the Census: Washington, DC.

[14] Poverty and income figures are in current dollars; data are not directly comparable across years.

[15] Note that there is no significant difference between the 30 percent and 26 percent of fathers in the middle income categories who care for their children.

Figure 5.
Fathers Caring for Their Preschoolers by Poverty Status: 1988 to 1993

(As a percent of married fathers within the same poverty status whose wives are employed)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

least likely to provide care, with only 16 percent doing so. In both 1988 and 1991 fathers with the highest family incomes were also the least likely to be caring for their preschoolers while the mothers were working. In addition, fathers with the highest incomes were the least likely to be primary care providers; 10 percent of these fathers were primary care providers in all three years.

Like fathers in poor families, those in families receiving AFDC, WIC, food stamps, or general assistance were more likely to be caring for their preschoolers while the mothers were at work. In 1993, 1 in 3 fathers whose families received benefits were taking care of their preschoolers compared with only 1 in 4 fathers whose families were nonrecipients. Fathers in recipient families were also much more likely to be primary care providers for their children while their mothers were working (26 percent compared with 18 percent).

Fathers in service occupations are more likely than fathers in other occupations to provide care for their preschoolers while their mothers are at work

Fathers who work in service occupations such as maintenance, police, fire fighting, and security positions are about twice as likely as fathers in any other occupation to be taking care of the preschoolers while the mothers are working. For example, in 1993, 42 percent of fathers in service occupations cared for their preschool-age children compared with about 20 percent of fathers who were in managerial/professional or technical/sales occupations (Table 3). Data for 1991 also support this same pattern. Note that fathers in service occupations were also more likely than fathers in other occupations to be primary care providers for the preschoolers while the mothers were working in both 1991 and 1993.

Both patterns may be due to the fact that fathers in service occupations are more likely to work nontraditional schedules than other fathers and therefore, may be more likely to be available for care. In 1993, for example, 13 percent of fathers in service occupations worked part time compared with about 7 percent of fathers in other occupations. Fathers in service occupations were also at least twice as likely as other fathers to work nonday shifts.

Veteran status makes a difference in whether or not a father cares for his preschoolers

Fathers who had served in the armed forces were more likely to care for their children and to be primary care providers than fathers who did not serve. In 1993, for example, 30 percent of fathers who were veterans took care of the children while their mothers were working compared with only 24 percent of fathers who were not veterans.[16] But, why are nonvets less likely to care for their preschoolers? Fathers who are nonveterans are more likely to be in managerial or professional occupations and to have higher family incomes; fathers with these characteristics are less likely to be caring for their preschoolers.

Care by fathers is the most common in the Northeast and least common in the South

Care by fathers is more common in some areas of the country than in others. In 1993, fathers in the Northeast were the most likely to be taking care of their children and to be providing primary care, while those in the South were the least likely to be doing so. About 33 percent of fathers in the Northeast provided care for their preschoolers during their mothers working hours, compared with 27 percent of fathers in the Midwest and West and only 18 percent in the South. Care by fathers was especially prevalent in New England where 4 out of 10 fathers cared for their children in 1993 (Figure 6).[17] Note that fathers

[16] Veteran status data were not tabulated for 1988.
[17] There is no significant difference between the proportions of preschoolers cared for by their fathers in New England compared with the Mountain states.

Table 3.

Fathers Providing Care for Preschoolers While Mothers Are Working, by Various Characteristics: 1988 to 1993

(Numbers in thousands)

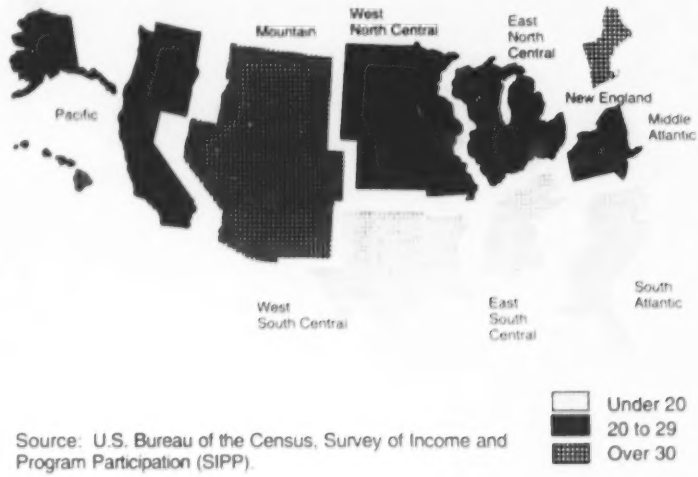
Characteristics	1993			1991			1988		
	Number of fathers	Percent providing care		Number of fathers	Percent providing care		Number of fathers	Percent providing care	
		All providers	Primary providers		All providers	Primary providers		All providers	Primary providers
All fathers	6,274	24.8	18.5	6,274	30.3	22.4	6,536	23.3	16.9
Race and Hispanic origin:									
White, not Hispanic	4,908	24.9	18.6	4,948	31.0	22.6	5,184	24.3	18.3
Black, not Hispanic	475	23.4	16.1	491	24.9	22.1	630	19.2	13.1
Hispanic origin	610	27.2	21.2	521	38.8	28.0	501	21.2	10.7
Other	281	19.8	16.3	314	13.4	11.5	221	15.3	9.9
Father's occupation									
Manager/professional	1,619	18.1	12.9	1,595	23.4	16.4	NA	NA	NA
Technical/sales	1,189	20.1	15.0	1,214	26.9	19.0	NA	NA	NA
Service	508	42.1	29.0	438	47.3	35.5	NA	NA	NA
Other	2,547	22.4	16.6	2,542	26.8	19.7	NA	NA	NA
Not employed last month	412	57.6	50.2	487	64.1	52.8	NA	NA	NA
Father's veteran status									
Veteran	1,044	29.7	22.4	1,092	35.1	27.1	NA	NA	NA
Not a veteran	5,230	23.8	17.8	5,183	29.3	21.4	NA	NA	NA
Region:									
Northeast	1,129	32.5	27.3	1,316	36.5	28.1	1,117	33.9	27.1
Midwest	1,778	26.7	18.6	1,692	30.9	23.5	1,813	25.1	17.5
South	2,094	17.8	13.1	1,883	21.3	17.6	2,322	19.0	13.7
West	1,274	26.7	19.8	1,384	35.9	22.3	1,284	19.3	13.1
Division:									
New England	363	38.5	31.5	440	47.3	36.8	366	41.3	32.1
Middle Atlantic	766	29.6	25.3	876	31.1	23.7	751	30.3	24.7
East North Central	1,210	27.7	19.2	1,004	30.7	23.7	1,042	27.3	19.9
West North Central	568	24.5	17.3	687	31.3	23.3	771	22.1	14.2
South Atlantic	1,130	17.4	11.9	977	23.6	19.9	1,165	18.7	13.6
East South Central	369	18.5	12.4	303	15.2	12.6	390	18.4	11.7
West South Central	594	18.2	15.7	604	20.6	16.3	768	19.8	15.0
Mountain	308	36.0	20.7	310	40.9	18.0	326	22.7	16.0
Pacific	966	23.7	19.5	1,074	34.4	23.5	958	18.1	12.1
Metropolitan residence:									
Central city	1,599	28.2	23.1	1,596	35.3	27.6	1,781	23.1	18.0
Suburb	3,286	22.2	16.4	3,192	27.8	20.4	3,060	23.7	16.8
Nonmetropolitan	1,390	26.9	18.3	1,487	30.4	21.3	1,695	22.8	16.1
Number of children under 5:									
One	4,929	22.5	16.3	4,868	27.7	20.4	5,124	21.8	15.7
Two or more	1,346	33.1	26.7	1,407	39.2	29.6	1,411	28.6	21.3
Age of father:									
Less than 25 years	402	32.9	25.6	426	31.8	20.7	447	23.2	17.3
25 to 34 years	3,347	24.2	18.2	3,433	30.1	21.4	3,941	24.6	17.4
35 years and over	2,526	24.2	17.9	2,416	30.4	24.2	2,147	20.9	15.9
Poverty status[1]:									
Below poverty	286	43.0	36.6	273	49.5	42.1	314	36.9	30.4
Above poverty	5,975	23.9	17.7	5,965	29.5	21.5	6,220	22.6	16.3
Family's monthly income [1]:									
Less than $1,500	407	45.3	40.3	470	39.1	30.6	622	35.6	30.6
$1,500 to $2,999	1,760	30.0	24.9	2,082	37.4	29.4	2,565	26.8	19.3
$3,000 to $4,499	1,856	26.0	18.3	1,910	30.1	22.0	1,985	21.3	14.7
$4,500 and over	2,238	16.1	9.9	1,776	20.0	12.6	1,363	14.0	9.7
Husband's monthly income [2]:									
Less than $1,500	1,619	30.1	25.1	1,930	37.0	29.4	2,060	26.3	19.9
$1,500 to $2,999	2,706	24.6	17.5	2,665	30.9	21.7	3,061	22.6	15.6
$3,000 to $4,499	1,182	19.7	13.1	985	24.8	17.9	883	20.4	13.4
$4,500 and over	651	15.7	10.3	559	12.4	7.5	434	12.6	11.0
Program participation:									
Recipient [3]	432	32.0	26.1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nonrecipient	5,842	24.2	18.0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

NA Data not tabulated for this year.
[1]Omits fathers with no family income. Income in current dollars.
[2]Omits fathers with no income. Income in current dollars.
[3]Receives AFDC, WIC, food stamps, or general assistance.
Note: Limited to married fathers whose wives are employed.

residing in the Northeast were the most likely to be primary providers in 1988 as well.

Geographical differences in the frequency of fathers caring for their children may relate to regional variations in employment rates, and in costs of child care and amounts of family income available to purchase alternative child care services. In fact, we have found that child care costs are indeed more expensive in the Northeast than in either the Midwest or the South.[18] Similarly, in 1993 for example, fathers were more likely to be nonemployed in the Northeast than in the Midwest or the South. It could also be that child care facilities may be farther away in some areas than in others; this might cause more people to choose neighbors and relatives (including fathers) over child care facilities that may be less accessible.

Figure 6.
Fathers Providing Care for Their Preschoolers, in Different Divisions of the Country: 1993
(As a percent of married fathers whose wives are employed)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

Care by fathers is the least common in the suburbs

In 1993, fathers in the suburbs were the least likely to care for their preschoolers when compared with fathers residing in the central cities and those in nonmetropolitan areas — 22 percent of suburban fathers compared with 27 percent of the other two groups. One reason for this pattern is that fathers living in suburban areas are more likely to have higher incomes and be better able to purchase alternative care services.

Fathers with two or more preschoolers are especially likely to take care of their preschoolers while their mothers are working

The number of preschoolers a father has helps to determine whether or not he takes care of them, perhaps because of the greater expense of hiring care for more than one preschooler. In 1993, 1 in 3 fathers cared for their preschoolers if they had two or more of them, compared with only about 1 in 5 fathers if they only had one preschooler at home. This pattern is similar for 1988 and 1991. Moreover, fathers with more than one preschooler were also more likely to be primary care providers for their children while the mother was at work, for all 3 years.

Source of the Data

The estimates in this report come from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). The SIPP is a longitudinal survey conducted at 4 month intervals by the Census Bureau. Although the main focus of SIPP is information on labor force participation, jobs, income, and participation in federal assistance programs, information on other topics is also collected in topical modules on a rotating basis. Data shown in this report refer to the fall of 1988, 1991, and 1993.

Accuracy of the Estimates

All statistics are subject to sampling error, as well as nonsampling error such as survey design flaws, respondent classification and reporting errors, data processing mistakes, and undercoverage. The Census Bureau has taken steps to minimize errors in the form of quality control and edit procedures to reduce errors made by respondents, coders, and interviewers. Ratio estimation to independent age-race-sex population controls partially corrects for bias because of survey undercoverage. However, biases exist in the estimates when missed persons have characteristics different from those of interviewed persons in the same age-race-sex group.

Analytical statements in this report have been tested and meet statistical standards. However, because of methodological differences, use caution when comparing these data with data from other sources. Contact Lieu Galvin, Demographic Statistical Methods Division, at 301-457-4209 or on the Internet at Lieu.Galvin@ccMail.census.gov for information on the source of data, the accuracy of estimates, the use of standard errors, and the computation of standard errors for estimates in this publication.

More Information

A detailed table package showing the characteristics of fathers taking care of their preschool-age

[18] L. M. Casper, 1995, op. cit.

and gradeschool-age children in 1988, 1991, and 1993 is available on floppy disk for $20 (PE-51) or on paper for $24 (PPL-53) from the Population Division's Statistical Information Office (301-457-2422). The table package is also available on the Internet (http://www.census.gov); search for child care data by clicking on the "Subjects A-Z" button and selecting "child care" under "C". Information about child care costs is available in the report *What Does It Cost to Mind Our Preschoolers?* (P70-52). In addition, information about child care arrangements is available in *Who's Minding Our Preschoolers?* (P70-53). To order copies of either of these reports, contact the Statistical Information Office.

Upcoming Reports

An updated version of the report *Who's Minding Our Preschoolers?* (P70-53) using 1994 SIPP data will be available in the near future.

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User Comments

The Census Bureau welcomes the comments and advice of users of its data and reports. If you have any suggestions or comments, please write to:

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